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 Digital Literacy Narrative  
 “Typing without Looking”  
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Digital media has challenged the development of my inner voice into one capable of converging successfully with an ever widening, socially driven, technological landscape. The intersection of internally derived thoughts and ideas with the very public arena of digital media pressurized my communication style into a more socially diversified set of commands, operations and actions. In the years since digital technologies progressed from simple mobile phones to multifarious vehicles for rapid electronic communication, such as texting and mobile computing, I have noticed the duration of time allotted for creating an effective sentiment is steadily quickening. In order to utilize digital media communication tools competently in the social sense, an internally focused contemplator like myself has had to learn to compose rapidly and efficiently just to keep up with what feels like lightening speed.  
 My social digital usage occurs through alphabetic text- to- send apparatus; mainly in the form of mobile phone or computer based texting and email. Navigating this electronically based language, characterized by what I find to be swift impersonality, has necessitated the development of a different form of social acclamation with others. I observe formal-proper speech (if that term still carries meaning), often melds with casual banter in the course of an average email or text transaction; especially given the unavailability of contextual cues an animated human might grant a fellow human or group of humans, in a live setting. How does one successfully insert tone, volume, timbre and intention into a cluster of alphabetic phrases, punched onto an electronically illuminated screen?   
 The answers required to resolve such a question constitute an ongoing inquiry motivated by my travails through digitized communication. Interestingly, I have discovered the progression of my capacity for infusing alphabetic textual symbols with genuine meaning in an electronic format correlates with the development of a similar skill set in composing general computer based intellectual writing. I notice some congruencies between dilemmas on how to make auditory cuing legible electronically, in my rapid day-to-day textual engagements, with comparable issues of stance, voice and motivation in formal intellectual writing. It occurs to me that an unintended consequence of my involvement with digital media technology may be its role as another practice forum for creating effective language communication needed for intellectual writing. The advanced compositional task of imbuing words on a page with meaningful resonance may be practiced even when writing the most succinct email. I try to mutually reinforce the two strategies in my personal practice within each realm.  
 For example, I find it important, aside for reasons of preserving my own lucidity, to utilize full-word typing when “texting”, even in the most casual demeanor. I recently replied to a friend’s early morning text “GM” with “General Manager? What?” When did “GM” become the known symbol for the common American English phrase “Good Morning” ? And what is wrong with my cognitive function that “GM” could mean any number of things to me and “Good Morning” did not even enter my imagination upon reading it?   
 The prolific overuse of acronyms for everything from “by the way” or “btw”, to “lmk” for “let me know”, (both of which I have only recently learned), as though these were symbols with ubiquitous meaning, seems puzzling to me. I often receive unrecognizable versions of language in emails from clients who are successful lawyers or bankers (implying high levels of formal academic education). Yet these symbols used to demarcate actual phrases carry no significance within my understanding of language. The more I have been exposed to such habits of conversing, the more I seem to solidify a resolve to reinforce full-text formations of words, phrases and therefore, thoughts. This notion is tied to my overall impression of the rushed feeling of digital communication means which often do not even leave time for a full word to by inscribed by the sender. I wish to preserve the use of full-words, even if I make errors in the process of composing a scuttled message on a device of keys and electronic illumination. Or maybe I am just in too much of a rush?  
 My introduction to digital technology progressed from personal communication through phone text and computer email in around 2000, into electronic computer- based composition when I returned to academia to complete my undergraduate degree in 2008. This initially meant utilizing a simple mobile phone, or as long tenured Professor once referred to what he currently utilizes: a “dumbphone.” This was the first time I had the ability to communicate with family members and friends when not in a physical dwelling where a landline was available. It took some time for this to gain a foothold in my thought process – meaning I no longer had to go to a home, office or payphone to talk. I could potentially by anywhere in the physical, spatial sense. I found the convenience comforting but little else shifted in my communication style. The later advent of the “smartphone” brought the remote reading and writing of emails. Still, I used this sparingly and did most of my major email composition on a computer which I had by this point become accustomed.   
 I realize that I became very comfortable with computer email composition and communication and transferred this approach to the use of my “smartphones.” I have attempted to compose emails and texts from my “smartphone” as though it were a computer, utilizing the same basic language structure, (or attempting to, given the potentiality for touch-screen error). Therefore, despite the evolution in digital technological tools of communication, I have tried to maintain the overall structure of my language and communication within each piece of apparatus.   
 A decent laptop and Microsoft Word software gave me a new level of freedom in my writing when I returned to academia after about a fourteen year hiatus. Having not composed works of writing or other academic subject areas with a computer or word processing program in primary or secondary school, this was my first exposure to utilizing a keyboard to flesh out ideas and produce academic work. During my time away from academic life, my relationship with digital technology revolved around orienting myself with these media tools as a “regular” person, out of basic adaptation to what was available, rather than the necessity to meet business or academic requirements.   
 While digital communication formats have changed greatly in their capacity and complexity since my usage began, the issue of effective language remains the same. I view electronic media as simply another language system, similar to the verbal or movement modalities I have employed in my everyday life; formerly as a professional ballet dancer, and presently as a Pilates Teacher. The language of movement is something I translate for my Pilates students just as I have studied it in my own physiological and intellectual being. With practice, this movement idiom, like the construct of electronic or other communication, becomes more fluent and less translation is required.  
 The comfort I had established with digital language deployed for personal and professional purposes lent well to orienting my academic thought process with a computer screen and keyboard. Presently, over five years since I returned to academic work, I am aware that I no longer feel confident composing an effective “final draft” of any type, whether a personal letter or an analytical essay, without an actual computer console in front of me. In addition, although my background is as a professional performing artist and wellness practitioner, for some reason I really enjoy typing. Perhaps this is because of the physicality of my bodily interaction with the keyboard and the placement of my hands, precisely overlaying keys for rapid production of words and ideas. I find myself able to type fastest and with least error, when not looking at my hands but focusing directly at the screen, or at another text if I am citing externally. If I were to visually recognize my fingers selecting keys to compose words, this would completely interrupt the flow of my compositional mechanism. Does this mean the keyboard has become a sort of extension of my body?  
 I believe I have incorporated the keyboard – computer screen system as an implement of creation and communication, just as I incorporate expressive tools of other idioms such as a piece of Pilates apparatus (equipment), a weight, or sneakers. These external objects have become enfolded into the modality of communication at hand, whether somatic, verbal or textual. I have been able to integrate Pilates apparatus into my body when practicing or teaching the language of Pilates movement, just as I enfolded pointe shoes into the kinetic chain of my lower limbs, (and entire body), when I was a ballet dancer – the shoes became a device in my artistic expression of the language of dance.   
 The simultaneous function of pressing keys to create words without focusing on the body part which executes this action reminds me of a similar mechanism I experienced as a dancer: when movements and emotive actions performed physically were transitioned from mirrored studio to concert stage. The stark contrast of the hyper-scrutinizing atmosphere of a ballet studio with the sweeping, self-imageless, darkened audience arena somehow progressed seamlessly. Ocular self-perception and cognitive self-monitoring of bodily movements and sensations were silenced into the submission of an altogether different conscious state. Visual recognition of my movements in the mirror, practiced during studio rehearsals, became internalized into a unification of brain, body and mind which performed choreographed ideas without conscious processing. I believe I have utilized a comparable method of composing at a computer screen, through bypassing the need to visually monitor the key strokes of my fingers about the computer console. Instead, I move directly from cognitive thought process to words visually illuminated before me – or at least this is my felt sensation of typing.  
 My relationship with digital media has mostly been contained within these basic channels of text, email and composition. I have not ventured much into online social forums beyond the most perfunctory professional types (ie; Linkedin, Facebook for professional use). Though I have enjoyed the use of the digital camera function in my “smartphones” since this became available, and have begun capturing video as well. I do not however socially disseminate these images or videos more than basic sharing. Knowing how and what to do with video is something I am interested in learning.   
 Despite my reticence to explore “social networking”, through them I have established contact with estranged colleagues or friends that I would not otherwise have had access. Yet these contacts produced mostly symbolic connections, which rarely surpass the boundaries of digital into real-life involvement. These associations have little significance in my overall sense of camaraderie or social involvement in the broader sense. I still utilize actual verbal communication, and in-person encounters with those I wish to maintain meaningful involvement.   
 In my professional life as a self-employed Pilates Teacher, I employ the fast typing I have cultivated over the years, to create succinct yet effective communication. Managing my own business includes the prolific use, solely of emails and texts, to schedule, secure payment, promote and maintain control over my client base. I rarely if ever speak with my clients by phone-call, except perhaps for a first-time introduction. Without the digital toolkit of text and email, I would not have been able to develop as successful and consistent a livelihood over almost a decade.   
 I traverse the digital and animated worlds on a daily basis with my clients. Exerting professional prowess with a friendly tone in digital communications, and extrapolating this demeanor into an engaging, humanistic service in the very intimate, in-person training sessions I deliver. I utilize my mobile “smartphone” as a tool for business and organization. Yet I do not seek comfort in it. I manage and regulate what it has to offer as a means of efficiency- to do more with less effort and less contact with others. Meaning, its purpose for me is to have less involvement, not more. Rather than drumming up more busywork for myself, I try to utilize the mobile computer of my phone for keeping things organized and therefore less time-consuming during the non-work hours I cherish. I find my interaction with this digital tool causes little interruption of the solitude I naturally enjoy. And perhaps this tendency toward privacy has dissuaded my use of all that digital media has to offer in the realm of business and “networking”, (a term I have grown to find somewhat annoying). The fortunate stability of my business has supported my resistance to become more media- integrated, yet I know this makes my digital fluency somewhat remedial. My reluctance toward building greater digital media fluency relates back with my stubborn refusal to give up the privacy of my inner-voice. Perhaps this trepidation is needless. I wish to surpass it by developing a form of digital media language proficiency which still aptly retains and expresses the internal voice I continue to cultivate in the space I find most fitting - privately.